

## **Flood Insurance Rate Maps**

- The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) is a tool developed by, or under contract to, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the purpose of rating flood insurance policies sold through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- FIRM is a pictorial representation of the results of hydrologic studies. In these studies, engineers determine how high water might rise and how often it could reach that height.
- For the FIRM, engineers select the water surface elevation that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any year and compare it with the ground elevation. That water surface elevation is called the Base Flood level.
- The area where the ground would be covered by water in a Base Flood is said to be in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).
- The 1 percent annual chance flood, or Base Flood, is commonly referred to as the 100-year flood.
- When property is determined to be in the SFHA, there is a reasonable expectation that something built on the property below the expected flood level will have a 1 percent chance or greater of being flooded per year. One percent accumulates to a 30 percent chance of flooding over the 30-year mortgage. That is why the federal government mandates that mortgages secured by buildings in the SFHA be protected by flood insurance on those buildings.

*Adapted from resource material developed by the Louisiana Extension Service entitled "Louisiana Floods"*